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ABSTRACT

Some strategies for developing educational materials are offered based on the idea that intermediate students of Japanese, if provided with appropriate materials and instruction, can engage in sustained non-technical discussion of business and economic topics much as native speakers do in social interaction. The discussion focuses on how to select topics and present them in easy conversational style and suggests some effective teaching methods. It is recommended that topics selected: (1) not require historical and cultural explanation, (2) not require technical or professional knowledge for comprehension, and (3) have general and universal applicability; a list of 29 topics meeting these criteria is included. Principles for constructing a model dialogue based on any topic are outlined, and steps in constructing related drills, exercises, and lesson plan are suggested. A sample model dialogue on exchange rates and related vocabulary, notes, drills, and exercises, in Japanese and English, are appended. (MSE)

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Discussing Business and Economy with Intermediate Students of Japanese

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Many instructors of Japanese assume that discussing business and economic topics is too difficult for intermediate students who have learned only basic Japanese grammar and sentence structures and who are most used to task-oriented, functional conversation. One reason for such a widely shared assumption is that most of the existing instructional materials in this field are designed for advanced students to become able to *read* economic and business articles in Japanese newspapers and journals. For example, the following recent publications are reading materials for advanced students: Association of Japanese Language Teachers, *Reading Japanese Financial Newspapers* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1991); Mitsuo Fujimori and Motoko Nozawa, *An Introduction to Japanese Economics* (Tokyo; Sotakusha, 1992). Such materials contain not only a large number of technical terms written in kanji (Chinese characters), but also phrases and sentence structures that are used primarily in writing and not in daily conversation.

It is certainly difficult even for native speakers to engage in technical discussions of business and economic topics. However, a majority of native speakers use a limited vocabulary and simple sentence structures when they discuss business and economic topics with their friends and colleagues in daily, social conversation. If provided proper materials and instruction, intermediate students will be able to sustain non-technical discussion of business and economic topics. These students want and need to be able to do more than complete tasks such as making an appointment on the phone, leaving a message, introducing a colleague to clients, etc. There is a tremendous gap in the abilities of intermediate students and advanced students of Japanese to discuss business and economic topics. We need materials that will help intermediate students make transitions to an advanced level of spoken Japanese.

There are already some intermediate and advanced textbooks that are designed for preparing

students to communicate with Japanese business people as colleagues at the office or negotiators in business talks. Such textbooks will prepare students to complete tasks such as making an appointment, answering the phone, leaving a message, etc. To cite a few publications: Nichi-bei Kaiwa Gakuin, *Nihongo de Bijinesu Kaiwa*, Chuukyuu-hen (Tokyo: Bonjinsha, 1987); Takehiko Takano, et. al., *Jitsuyoo Bijinesu Nihongo* (Tokyo: Aruku, 1993); Mami Doi, et. al., *Talking Business in Japanese* (Tokyo: The Japan Times, 1991). To the best of my knowledge, however, there is no intermediate-level textbook of spoken Japanese that will help students discuss business and economic topics--such as inflation, exchange rates, unemployment, and productivity.

In this paper, I will discuss some basic strategies for developing instructional materials for intermediate students to discuss business and economic topics, and will provide an example that follows the strategies. The discussion will focus on how to select topics and how to present them in easy conversational style. I will also discuss teaching methods that will be effective for using such materials.

"Intermediate students" here means those students who have completed at least four or five semesters of college-level Japanese in the U.S. or those who can demonstrate that their oral proficiency level is "intermediate high" or above on the ACTFL rating scale. Intermediate students are expected to have learned basic Japanese grammar and sentence structures.

Developing Instructional Materials

My goal is to enable intermediate students to sustain a brief, non-technical discussion on business and economic issues in the way that Japanese do with friends and colleagues in social

conversation. Instructional materials should be designed so as to help students create their own dialogues that will be based on information about current business and economic conditions. The level of difficulty should be gradually increased so as to help intermediate students make transitions to an advanced level.

A. Selection of Topics

The following strategies will be used to select topics for the materials.

1. Avoid topics that require historical and cultural explanation. For example, the ***keiretsu*** system is too complex for intermediate students to discuss. Any discussion of such a topic will require not only a prior knowledge of the subject matter but also an advanced-level proficiency in Japanese. Although it is essential for students of business Japanese to know about Japanese business culture and commercial practices as well as the Japanese market, discussing such subjects in Japanese will be beyond intermediate students.

2. Avoid topics that require technical or professional knowledge to understand their contents. For example, *taishaku taishoo hyoo* (balance sheet) will not be an appropriate topic for intermediate students to discuss. Those who have not studied accounting will find such a topic too difficult and/or unattractive; they would not discuss it even in their mother tongue.

3. Select topics that have general and universal applicability. For example, topics such as inflation, foreign trade, employment and advertising may be discussed--even if superficially--without much knowledge of technical concepts and of Japanese economic history and business culture.

The topics that I have tentatively selected are as follows:

1. *En Sooba* (yen exchange rate)
2. *Keiki* (economic performance or prospect)
3. *Bukka* (prices of goods and services)
4. *Kabushiki Shikyoo* (stock prices)
5. *Kin'yuu* (finance, banking)
6. *Sangyoo* (industries)
7. *Kigyoo* (corporations)
8. *Roodoo* (labor)
9. *Seihin* (products)
10. *Seisansei* (productivity)
11. *Shoohisha* (consumers)
12. *Chingin* (wages)
13. *Koyoo* (employment)
14. *Shuushoku* (job hunting)
15. *Sarariiman* (office workers)
16. *Ryuutsuu* (distribution)
17. *Hanbai* (sales)
18. *Kookoku* (advertisement)
19. *Booeki* (foreign trade)
20. *Kokusai Shuushi* (balance of payments)
21. *Booeki Masatsu* (trade dispute)
22. *Kokka Yosan* (the national budget)

23. *Zeisei* (tax system)

24. *Kinyuu, Zaisei Seisaku* (fiscal and monetary policies)

25. *Shakai Hoshoo, Fukushi* (social security and welfare)

26. *Kankyoo Mondai* (environmental issues)

27. *Kooreika Shakai* (aging society)

28. *Juutaku, Fudoosan* (housing and real estate)

29. *Kyooiku* (education)

These topics seem to be difficult at a glance, but some ideas and information pertaining to such topics can be presented in simple conversational Japanese (see Appendix for an example).

B. Model Dialogues

The following plans are to be followed when presenting ideas and information in a topic that will be chosen for discussion.

1. A topic may be segmented into a few sub-topics. Each topic or segment of a topic will focus on only a few concepts that students are familiar with or may be easily understood. Presentation of a topic should be very brief.

2. Each topic should be presented in a simple conversational style--not in any formal writing styles that have been commonly used to present topics on business and economy. Each topic will be presented as a brief model dialogue. To intermediate students, reading a passage written in formal, literary Japanese would be like decoding an ancient, alien document.

3. Each sentence in a model dialogue should be both short and simple in structure so that students can easily memorize it. It is essential for students to learn a model dialogue by heart

before they attempt to create their own dialogues.

C. Drills, Exercises, and Teaching Plans

Each model dialogue should be accompanied by drills and exercises that will include supplementary words for students to learn. Drills and exercises should be designed in such a way that will help students apply a model dialogue to real, current situations. Such drills and exercises are essential, given that the objective is for students to create their own dialogues.

The appendix of this paper provides a sample of materials that I plan to develop. This sample includes a model dialogue (En Sooba; yen exchange rate), vocabulary, and notes as well as drills and exercises. I believe that the single most important step is to create practical model dialogues that are simple and brief for students to memorize.

The study of a lesson may proceed in the following steps:

1. Assign students to listen to a model dialogue that will be recorded in an audio tape and to study vocabulary and notes.

2. Explain the model dialogue and do a sample of drills in class. Assign students to memorize the model dialogue and practice all the drills. This must be done with the audio tape.

3. The model dialogue will be recited by pairs of students in class. This will be followed by activities that will include (1) asking and answering questions relating to the topic by using the expressions that students have practiced in the drills; and (2) doing the exercises that will help students to apply the model dialogue to current situations.

4. Assign pairs of students to create their own dialogues using the latest data, information, and situations known to the students. Check their written dialogues and assign students to

memorize the corrected dialogues for recitation in class.

I will try out the first lesson (En Sooba; Yen Exchange Rate) on some intermediate students at Thunderbird, The American Graduate School of International Management, and would like to report the result at the forthcoming EMU conference.

1 円相場(えんそうば)

1 スミス　今日の円相場は　どうですか。

2 吉田(よしだ)　また1円ほど上(あ)がって、1ドル　105円43銭(せん)です。

3 スミス　1週間前と比(くら)べて、4円ほどの円高(えんだか)ですね。

4 吉田　日本の輸出企業(ゆしゅつきぎょう)は大変(たいへん)ですね。

5 スミス　ええ。　でも、石油(せきゆ)などの原料(げんりょう)は　安く輸入(ゆにゅう)できますね。

ENGLISH EQUIVALENTS

1 SMITH: What is the yen exchange rate for today (against the dollar)?
2 YOSHIDA: (Its value) rose by one yen. (The exchange rate) is ¥105.43 to the dollar.
3 SMITH: It is four yen higher than a week ago.
4 YOSHIDA: Japanese export-related businesses are having a tough time.
5 SMITH: Yes, they are. But, raw materials like oil can be imported cheaper.

DRILL 1. Substitute the underlined parts.

今日の円相場(えんそうば)は どうですか。

1. 為替相場(かわせそうば) (foreign) exchange rate
2. 為替(かわせ)レート (=為替相場) (foreign) exchange rate
3. ドル相場(そうば) the exchange rate of the dollar
4. 株式相場(かぶしきそうば) stock prices
5. 金相場(きんそうば) quotation for gold
6. 原油(げんゆ)の先物相場(さきものそうば) forward price of crude oil

DRILL 2. Change the following as shown in the example.

Ex. ￥1 ↑ --> 1円(えん) あがりました。
¢5 ↓ --> 5セント さがりました。(さがる=to fall; go down)

1. ￥3 ↑
2. ￥25 ↑
3. ￥6 ↓
4. ¢32 ↓
5. ¢11 ↑
6. $8 ↓ (ドル)
7. ￥7 ↓

DRILL 3. Repeat after the tape.

1. 1銭(いっせん)
2. 2銭(にせん)
3. 3銭(さんせん)
4. 4銭(よんせん)
5. 5銭(ごせん)
6. 6銭(ろくせん)
7. 7銭(しち or なな せん)
8. 8銭(はっせん)
9. 9銭(きゅうせん)
10. 10銭(じゅっせん)

DRILL 4. Change the following as shown in the example.

Ex. ドル=￥105.43 --> 為替(かわせ)レートは 1ドル 105円43銭(せん)です。

1. ドル＝￥１１３．２６
2. ポンド (pound sterling) ＝￥１６２．５９
3. フラン (franc)＝￥　２１．１４
4. カナダドル (Canadian dollar)＝￥８２．７９
5. マルク　(mark)＝￥６２．３８
6. 元（げん; yuan) ＝￥１２．８１　　（元は中国の通貨（currency）です。）
7. ペソ (peso) ＝￥３９．２２
8. １００　ウォン (won)＝￥１３．５７　（ウォンは韓国の通貨です。）

DRILL 5. Choose the appropriate word below to complete sentences A, B, D, and D.

A. アメリカは　日本に　＿＿＿＿を　たくさん　輸出しています。
B. 日本は　アメリカから　＿＿＿＿を　たくさん　輸入しています。
　　輸出（ゆしゅつ）する＝to export

1. 木材（もくざい; lumber)
2. 大豆（だいず; soybeans)
3. 魚介類（ぎょかいるい; fish and shell fish)
4. 航空機（こうくうき; aircraft)

C. 日本は　アメリカに　＿＿＿＿を　たくさん　輸出しています。
D. アメリカは　日本から　＿＿＿＿を　たくさん　輸入しています。

5. 自動車（じどうしゃ; automobiles)
6. 鉄鋼（てっこう; iron and steel)
7. 事務用機器（じむようききき; office equipment)
8. ＶＴＲ（ヴイ・ティー・アール;　video tape recorder; VCR)

EXERCISE I. Look at the table below and practice the dialogues as shown in the examples. Substitute the underlined parts.

Ex. 1. A: 一週間前と比べて、今日の円相場は　どうですか。
　　B: ２円ほどの円高です。
　2 A: 三日前と比べて、円はどのぐらい　下がりましたか。
　　B: １円ぐらいです。

3. A: X年前と比べて、円はどのぐらい 上がりましたか。
   B: X円ぐらい 上がりました。

Useful words: 円安（えんやす）＝weak yen; value depreciation of the yen
下（さ）がる ＝to fall; go down
平均（へいきん）＝the average

年月日	円相場 1ドル＝
1960年	360
1975年平均	296
1980年平均	226
1885年平均	238
1990年平均	144
2月10日 木	107.32
11日 金	103.22
12日 土	--
13日 日	--
14日 月	104.55
15日 火	108.39
TODAY 水	105.60

EXERCISE II. Based on the latest information available, answer the following questions

1. 今日の円相場は どうですか。

2. 今日の円相場は　1週間前と比(くら)べて　どうですか。

3. きのうの円相場は　1ドル　いくらでしたか。

4. 今日の為替(かわせ)レートは　1ドル　なんマルクですか。

5. 今日の為替レートは　1ドル　なんペソですか。

6. 今日の円相場は　1週間前と比べて、円高ですか、円安(やす)ですか。

7. 日本は　アメリカから　どんなものを　輸入(ゆにゅう)していますか。

8. 日本は　アメリカに　どんなものを　輸出(ゆしゅつ)していますか。

9. アメリカは　どんなものを　中国(ちゅうごく)に　輸出していますか。

10. アメリカは　どんなものを　中国から輸入していますか。

EXERCISE III. Create your own dialogue using Dialogue 1 as a model. Try to use the latest data or information. Submit your written dialogue to your instructor to have it corrected, and practice it with your partner. You will be expected to recite your dialogue in class.

DIALOGUE 1

1. a 相場（そう・ば） — market price; quotation; (exchange) rate
   b 円相場（えん・そう・ば） — the yen exchange rate: the yen-dollar rate is often assumed when it is not specified.
   c 円相場はどうですか。 — Lit., How is the yen doing (against the dollar)? When いくらですか (instead ofどうですか) is used, it would only ask what the rate is, not how it has changed.
2. a 上（あ）がる — to rise; go up
   b 銭（せん） — one hundredth of a yen: currency denomination no longer used
   c １ドル　１０５円です。 — (The exchange rate) is 105 yen to the dollar.
3. a 比（くら）べる — to compare
   b ～と　比べて — when comparing to/with～; compared to/with～
   c 円高（えん・だか） — value appreciation of the yen; strong yen
4. a 輸出（ゆ・しゅつ） — export (the act of exporting)
   b 企業（き・ぎょう） — business (commercial and industrial establishment); enterprise
   c 輸出企業 — businesses that export a substantial amount of their products; export-related businesses
   d 大変（たい・へん）です — to be having difficulties or a tough time: な-type adjective (たいへんな)
5. a 石油（せき・ゆ） — oil (petroleum)
   b 原料（げん・りょう） — raw materials
   c 安（やす）く — cheaply; inexpensively: adverbial form of やすい.
   d 輸入（ゆ・にゅう）する — to import

Supplemntary Vocabulary

Drill A.

1. 為替（かわせ）相場 — (foreign) exchange rate
2. 為替レート — (foreign) exchange rate
4. 株式（かぶ・しき）相場 — stock prices; stock quotations
5. 金（きん） — gold

Drill 1

6. a 原油（げん・ゆ）	crude oil
b 先物（さき・もの）相場（そうば）	futures quotations; a forward price

Drill 2

Ex. 下（さ）がる	to fall; go down

Drill 4

2. ポンド	pound sterling
3. フラン	(French) franc
5. マルク	(German) mark
6. a 元（げん）	(Chinese) yuan
b 通貨（つう・か）	currency
7. ペソ	peso
8. ウォン	won (currency of the Republic of Korea)

Drill 5

A. 輸出（ゆ・しゅつ）する	to export
1. 木材（もく・ざい）	lumber
2. 大豆（だい・ず）	soybeans
3. 魚介類（ぎょ・かい・るい）	fish and shell fish
4. 航空機（こう・くう・き）	aircraft
5. 自動車（じ・どう・しゃ）	automobile
6. 鉄鋼（てっ・こう）	iron and steel
7. 事務用機器（じ・む・よう・き・き）	offce equipment
8. ＶＴＲ（ヴイ・ティー・アール）	video tape recorder; VCR

Exercise I

Ex. 円安（えん・やす）	weak yen; value depreciation of the yen
平均（へい・きん）	the average